Coalition Operations

The Strategic Environment: Observations from a U.S. and NATO Perspective

MG (Ret.) Ken Bowra

Field Marshal Sir Arthur Wellesly, First Duke of Wellington

“The only thing worse than an Alliance is no Alliance at all.”

Wellington’s Waterloo Dispatch following the Battle of Waterloo:

“I should not do justice to my feelings or Marshal Blücher and the Prussian Army, if I did not attribute the success of this arduous day to the cordial and timely assistance I received from them.”

Coalition Observations

- The enemy will see a coalition as one of the most important centers of gravity, and will focus his efforts to disrupt and destroy it.
- Each coalition partner brings unique experiences and special skills to the battlefield. The key is to properly employ them to maximize capabilities.
- Respect coalitions partners National restrictions or limitations.

Coalition Observations (Continued)

- Never, ever, coerce a coalition commander to accept a mission beyond his authority.
- Interoperability goes way beyond equipment. The key is to be able to operate together in a challenging environment.
- Understand and respect coalition members customs and cultures.
- Language…Language…Language: Have qualified linguist to work with coalition members.

Coalition Observations (Continued)

- Always plan for Coalition Support Teams in an operation.
- A coalition must speak with one voice.
- Listen to coalition members.
- Figure out HOW to share National intelligence with coalition partners. Not sharing, or the perception of not sharing, may do more damage to the coalition than the enemy ever will be able to do.

Coalition Observations (Continued)

- Do not wait for a crisis or Force Generation Conference to build a coalition. Coalition building is a continual effort and national process.

“Geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us allies. Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” – John F. Kennedy

Green Peace Meets Coalition Warfare